

Proclamation 6694—Pediatric and Adolescent AIDS Awareness Week, 1994*May 25, 1994**By the President of the United States
of America***A Proclamation**

Ten thousand children in the United States today are living with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). Ten million children worldwide will become infected with HIV before the millennium. Over 5,000 cases of pediatric AIDS and 1,500 cases of AIDS in adolescents ages 13 through 19 have been reported in this country alone. The tragedy is magnified for our youth, as the epidemic reaches far beyond those actually infected—it will leave up to 125,000 children and teenagers orphaned in this country by the end of this decade. By the year 2000, AIDS will be one of the five leading causes of death among American children ages one to four.

It is agonizing to watch our young suffer and die. It is all the more painful because we have been frustrated thus far in our efforts to find a cure. But we must not give up hope nor stand by idly. With hard work, we will find that cure. Moreover, HIV and AIDS are preventable. Americans can stop AIDS with targeted, linguistically specific, and culturally based prevention education for people in all age groups. If we are to overcome the HIV epidemic, communities must address difficult and controversial issues surrounding sexuality, drug abuse, and health care delivery.

The effects of infection by HIV are different in children than in adults. Infected infants get sicker faster, their immune systems may deteriorate more rapidly, and treatments that are helpful to adults may not be helpful for children.

It is imperative to continue the research now being done to study ways to prevent transmission of HIV from mother to infant. We must also develop and refine treatments that increase the survival time and quality of life of HIV-infected infants, children, and adolescents.

As a people, we must see to it that those among us living with HIV and AIDS are allowed to enjoy productive lives for as long as possible. We must put aside our differences and recognize the necessity of working together to defeat our common enemy—HIV. I challenge all Americans to join the fight. And we must educate people about the true nature of HIV so that the discrimination and fear born of ignorance and translated into ostracism and discrimination can be stopped.

Many communities across the country have already realized the grave dangers posed to our society by HIV and have responded by reaching out to battle the disease. More people must become involved now, or many more lives will be needlessly lost. This Administration, through the Office of National AIDS Policy and its Cabinet agencies, has joined with community-based AIDS organizations, families, businesses, professional associations, churches, schools, and universities to fight HIV and AIDS. Early intervention and educational resources must be made available, especially to youth and other high-risk groups. One in five of all reported AIDS cases is diagnosed in the 20–29 year old age group, meaning that these people were adolescents when they became infected.

The single most important step taken by my Administration in the fight against HIV and AIDS is the introduction to the Congress of the Health Security Act of 1993. All people living with HIV and AIDS, especially our children, must often fight not only the disease, but also a health care system likely to deny them coverage in their moment of greatest need. This Administration is absolutely committed to ensuring every American adequate health care coverage that will never be taken away. To do any less in a nation as resourceful as ours would be unacceptable.

Remembering that every person living with HIV and AIDS is someone's child, we must work together tirelessly to find a cure. We must distribute our human and financial resources across the Nation to strengthen and expand programs for HIV and AIDS education, treatment, research, and prevention.

We can stop the terrible harvest of children and adolescents wrought by HIV and AIDS. Working together we have the power to stop this plague.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim the week of May 29 through June 4, 1994, as Pediatric and Adolescent AIDS Awareness Week. I call on the people of America, the Governors of the 50 States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Mayor of the District of Columbia, and officials of other areas under the flag of the United States of America, to join with me in the continuing fight against HIV and AIDS and to remember especially during this week children and young people living with HIV and AIDS and their families.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-fifth day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and eighteenth.

William J. Clinton

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Remarks on Signing the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act of 1994

May 26, 1994

Thank you very much, General Reno, for your leadership on this issue. Thank you, Mr. Vice President. Senator Kennedy, Chairman Brooks, Congressman Schumer, Congresswoman Schroeder, Congresswoman Morella, thank you all for your leadership. I thank the Republicans as well as the Democrats in the Congress. I think it is important to point out that this bill had bipartisan support. I'd also like to acknowledge the presence here today among us of David and Wendy Gunn, the children of Dr. David Gunn from Florida.

Thank you for coming, and you're welcome here today.

Enacting this bill to provide freedom of access to clinics has been a priority because protecting the freedoms of our citizens is surely chief among the responsibilities of the President of the United States. This bill is designed to eliminate violence and coercion. It is not a strike against the first amendment. Far from it, it ensures that all citizens have the opportunity to exercise all their constitutional rights, including their privacy rights under the Constitution.

Our people have genuine and deeply felt differences on the subject of abortion, even if abortion is safe, legal, and rare. But we must all agree that as a nation we must remain committed to the rule of law. It is what keeps us civilized. It is what enables us to live together. It protects our liberties as individuals and as a nation. It gives us the freedom at election time to try to elect those who agree with us and defeat those who don't. It gives us a way to carry on as one nation from many people with many different views.

We simply cannot, we must not continue to allow the attacks, the incidents of arson, the campaigns of intimidation upon law-abiding citizens that has given rise to this law. No person seeking medical care, no physician providing that care should have to endure harassments or threats or obstruction or intimidation or even murder from vigilantes who take the law into their own hands because they think they know what the law ought to be.

What happened to the father of Wendy and David Gunn should not have happened. The shooting attack that wounded Dr. George Tiller in Wichita, Kansas, should not have happened. Now with this legislation we will have a law with teeth to deal with those who take part in unlawful activities, who put themselves above and beyond the law. Because of the violence it will curb, the lives and property it will protect, and the constitutional rights of women it will uphold, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act becomes law today.

Let me say again that the awful circumstances which gave rise to this law are the most extreme example of a trend running